

# **DRAFT Environmental Assessment**

## **Milltown State Park Proposed Parcel Acquisitions**



Aerial photo of the proposed Milltown State Park, June 2011.

**June 2011**



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## **1.0 PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION**

### **1.1. Proposed Action and Need**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to acquire three parcels of land totaling approximately 465 acres to develop a State Park at the current Milltown Reservoir Sediments Superfund Site at the Confluence of the Clark Fork and Blackfoot Rivers in Missoula County. If acquired, these parcels--along with approximately 78 acres currently owned by FWP--would form the core of the Milltown State Park site and enable its development.

FWP would accept the transfer of two parcels currently owned by the State of Montana (one held by the Natural Resource Damage Program and another by the Department of Environmental Quality) and the donation of a third from Five Valleys Land Trust (Figure 1).

- **Parcel A** is the former NorthWestern Energy property (approximately 416 acres). As a result of the Superfund cleanup, it was acquired by the State of Montana in December of 2010 and includes the reconstructed floodplain of the Clark Fork River as well as the lower Blackfoot River. The area is managed by the State's Natural Resource Damage Program (NRDP). As river restoration work finishes, NRDP would transfer the property to FWP.
- **Parcel B**, the Milltown Bluff property (approximately 13.6 acres), is located on the south side of the Clark Fork River above the former dam site. The land was acquired by the State of Montana in February 2011 and is managed by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). Upon completion of a visitor overlook, DEQ would transfer the property to FWP.
- **Parcel C** is the Jacobs property (approximately 35 acres) located to the east and southeast of the Deer Creek County Road. In 2010, the Missoula-based Five Valleys Land Trust (FVLT) purchased the privately held parcel adjacent to the proposed park site to provide a critical access point and trail link. FVLT would donate the land to FWP for inclusion in the park.

FWP acceptance of the three parcels would fulfill the long-standing community expectation of public ownership for the Milltown Superfund site and the restored confluence. For the last eight years, the Milltown Superfund Redevelopment Working Group (MSRWG, or "Working Group"), a broad-based citizens' group, has cooperated with local, state and federal agencies, local non-profit organizations and the public to plan for the future of the Milltown Superfund Site. The transfer of the Milltown parcels is essential to the park development envisioned by the 2008 conceptual design plan crafted by the Working Group, and its partners FWP, Missoula County, the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program, and the Idaho-Montana Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects. The conceptual design plan for Milltown Park can be accessed at online at [http://www.cftrac.org/images/pdf/july2008/final\\_concept\\_plan\\_report.pdf](http://www.cftrac.org/images/pdf/july2008/final_concept_plan_report.pdf) (accessed 24 Jun 2011).

In 2010, FWP and the Milltown Superfund Redevelopment Working Group and Missoula County received a NRDP grant for approximately \$2.6 million for the establishment of a public park through the acquisition of four parcels from The Nature Conservancy (TNC), development of park facilities, and resources for the park's initial operations and maintenance. The 2011 Legislature approved the expenditure of these funds for the project. On June 9, 2011, the FWP Commission gave the department



preliminary approval to move forward with the acquisition by developing this draft environmental assessment and seeking public comment.

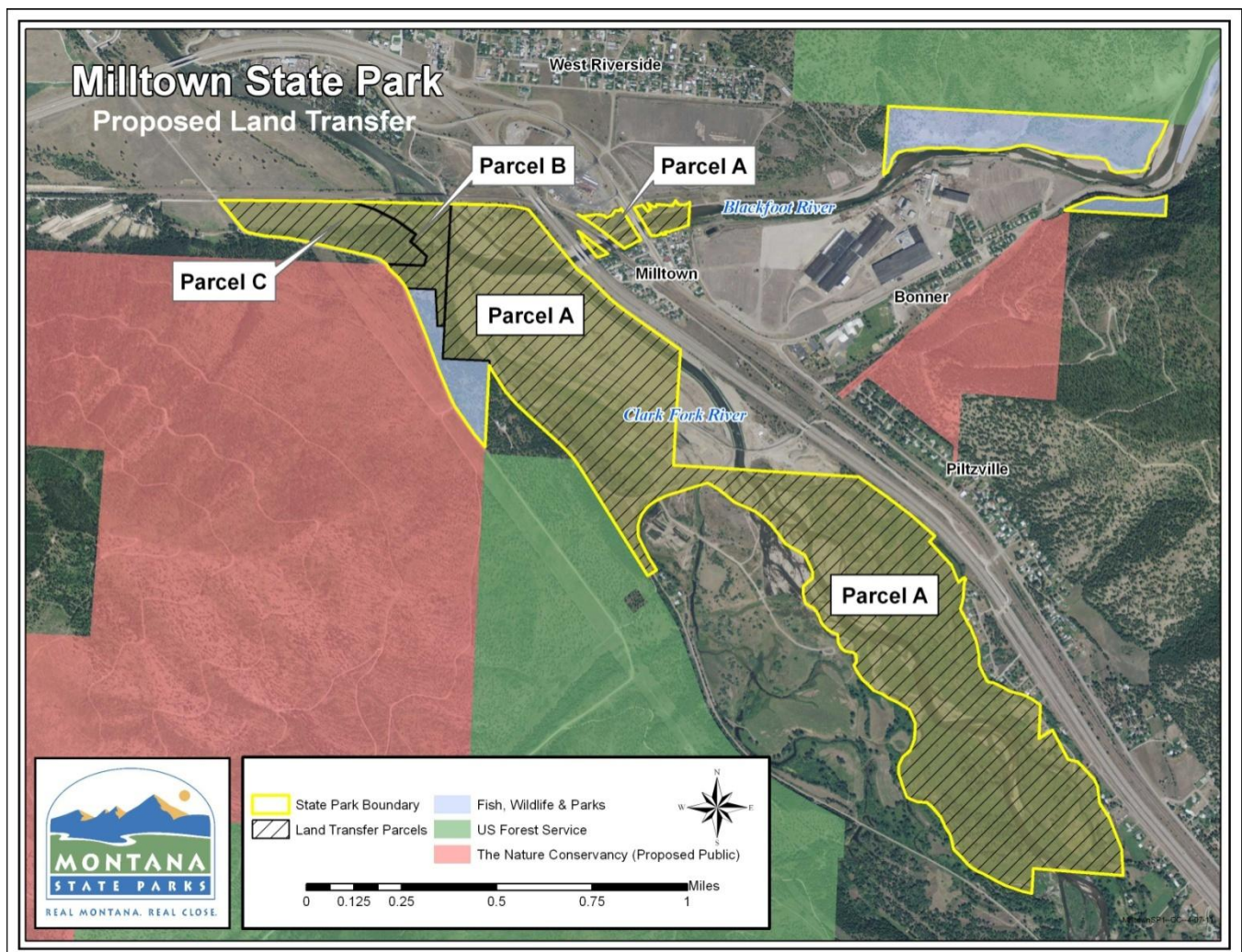


Figure 1. Proposed Milltown Land Acquisitions 2011.

The state park proposed at Milltown is a complex, multi-phased effort that would be carried out over the next five years. Elements envisioned in the overall park development include, in approximate order of importance:

1. Acquisition of the NorthWestern Energy Company property (416 acres), the Milltown Bluff property (13.6 acres) and the Jacobs property (35 acres);
2. Gateway and Confluence development: Construction of trails; construction of two pavilions with a plaza in front; and other park and access features such as toilets, signs, benches, picnic tables, doggie stations, bike racks, site grading, gates, and revegetation;
3. Design and construction of a 700-foot pedestrian bridge across the Clark Fork River;

4. Construction of hiking trails and minimal park facilities in the reconstructed floodplain;
5. Development of the Jacobs property (Parcel C) with the construction of a parking lot, park amenities and trail connecting to the pedestrian bridge over the Clark Fork River;
6. Acquisition of a trail easement and construction of a trail along the Blackfoot River to access FWP property acquired from TNC in 2010; and
7. Evaluation of safety improvements to a 300-foot railroad tunnel (below the Milltown Bluff) to allow pedestrian/cyclist access.

The initial phase of park development, described in this draft environmental assessment (EA), focuses on acquiring the parklands. Lands transferred or donated in this acquisition would constitute the core of the new state park. Portions of Parcel A along the lower Blackfoot River (the Milltown Gateway) and the Confluence area would be the first area to be developed, in late 2011 and 2012, with a riverfront trail, park amenities and a proposed footbridge. That work would be discussed and analyzed in a subsequent FWP environmental assessment. Other park project components would be proposed and assessed as funding and resources are secured.

### **1.2 Objectives of the Proposed Action**

- Secure land under FWP ownership for state park designation and development;
- Provide lasting public access to Milltown lands and nonmotorized trail connectivity;
- Make available outdoor recreation and education opportunities to local residents, as well as visitors; and
- Permanently protect restored riparian and wildlife habitat.

### **1.3 Location**

The project area is located near the unincorporated community of Milltown, adjacent to the Clark Fork and Blackfoot Rivers, approximately five miles east of Missoula along Interstate Highway 90 (I-90) in Missoula County.

#### Legal Descriptions:

**Parcel A:** Tracts of land located in the NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  and SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Section 20, the W  $\frac{1}{2}$  of Section 21, the N  $\frac{1}{2}$  of Section 28, the NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  and the S  $\frac{1}{2}$  of Section 27, and the NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Section 34, all in Township 13 North, Range 18 West, P.M.M Missoula County, Montana.

**Parcel B:** Tracts of land in the NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  and N  $\frac{1}{2}$  SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  and the SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Section 20 Township 13 North, Range 18 West, P.M.M Missoula County, Montana.

**Parcel C:** A tract of land in the N  $\frac{1}{2}$  Section 20 Township 13 North, Range 18 West, P.M.M Missoula County, Montana.

### **1.4 Relevant Plans**

Draft Conceptual Redevelopment Plan for the Confluence of the Clark Fork and Blackfoot Rivers and adjacent communities explored the future of the Bonner-Milltown area following the cleanup of the Milltown Reservoir Sediments Superfund site. Chief among the report's recommendations was the

creation of a publicly owned park and a trail system that connects the towns of Bonner-Milltown with the Confluence Area, as well as with Missoula, Turah and recreation areas on the Blackfoot River and Pattee Canyon Recreation Area (Milltown Superfund Site Redevelopment Working Group, 2005).

Milltown/Two Rivers Park Conceptual Design Plan details the design plan to create a new state park at the confluence of the Clark Fork and Blackfoot Rivers after the removal of Milltown Dam and the restoration work of the reservoir area is completed (Milltown Superfund Site Redevelopment Working Group, 2008).

20/20 Vision for Montana State Parks examines direction and priorities for state parks in the first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. (FWP, 1998)

Missoula County Growth Policy serves as a planning guide for local officials and citizens, which is reviewed every five years after adoption. The most recent update of the policy was updated in 2005 (amended 2010). It provides a long-range statement of local public policy defining guidance for managing and accommodating development within the county (December 2006).

Missoula County Parks and Conservation Lands Plan is meant to guide citizens, the County Park Board, and the Board of County Commissioners in their work to improve and maintain park lands within Missoula County (1997).

Missoula Urban Area Open Space Plan 2006 Update calls for expanding the open space system through land acquisition and conservation easements in order to create a network of open lands, trails, and bike paths to better access existing and new open spaces.

Missoula County Zoning Resolution establishes districts wherein compatible uses of land may be located and grouped to create, protect, or maintain a quality environment for the citizens of the County of Missoula (updated 2007).

#### FWP Comprehensive Fish & Wildlife Management Strategy

The Blackfoot River is identified in the Montana's Comprehensive Fish and Wildlife Conservation Strategy (2005), as one of five Aquatic Focus Areas in the state. The Blackfoot River supports two community types of greatest conservation need (Tier 1 community types; intermountain/foothill grassland and riparian & wetland) as well as five Tier 1 species, including the endangered bull trout.

Table 1 lists Montana Species of Concern (SOC)<sup>1</sup> and Threatened/Endangered species (US Fish and Wildlife Service status under the Endangered Species Act) that have been observed on the property or are predicted to occur within the vicinity (Montana Natural Heritage database).

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<sup>1</sup> A native animal breeding in Montana that is considered to be "at risk" due to declining population trends, threats to its habitats, and/or restricted distribution. The purpose of Montana's SOC listing is to highlight species in decline and encourage conservation efforts to reverse population declines and prevent the need for future listing as Threatened or Endangered Species under the Federal Endangered Species Act.

Table 1. Montana Species of Concern and Threatened/Endangered Species observed or expect to occur on the three parcels proposed for acquisition by FWP.

Common name <i>Species</i>	Status*	Habitat	Status in Vicinity of Parcels
<b><u>Species of Concern</u></b>			
Bull Trout <i>Salvelinus confluentus</i>	Threatened, SOC, Tier 1	Mountain streams, rivers, and lakes	Uses the Blackfoot River and Clark Fork River near Parcels A and B as a migratory corridor.
Westslope Cutthroat Trout <i>(Oncorhynchus clarki lewisi)</i>	Sensitive, SOC, Tier 1	Coldwater streams	Uses the Blackfoot River and Clark Fork River near Parcels A and B as a migratory corridor.
Canada Lynx <i>(Lynx Canadensis)</i>	Threatened, SOC Tier 1	Subalpine conifer forests	The area has low quality lynx habitat.
Fisher <i>(Martes pennant)</i>	SOC, Tier 2	Mixed conifer forest	The area has low quality fisher habitat.
Hoary Bat <i>(Lasiurus cinereus)</i>	SOC, Tier 2	Conifer and riparian forests	Suitable habitat, no surveys have been done to document presence/absence.
Wolverine <i>(Gulo gulo)</i>	SOC, Tier 2	Conifer forests	The area has low quality wolverine habitat. Potential movement area, not verified.
Bald Eagle <i>(Haliaeetus leucocephalus)</i>	Delisted, SOC, Tier 1	Riparian forests	Nest sites at east Missoula and upper end of former Milltown Reservoir, 0.2 miles (324 meters) from Parcel A.
Clark's Nutcracker <i>(Nucifraga Columbiana)</i>	SOC, Tier 3	Conifer forests	Birds present & probably use all of the parcels.
Flammulated Owl <i>(Otus flammeolus)</i>	SOC, Tier 1	Low-mid elevation conifer forests with large trees	Parcels B & C provide the best habitat for this species. Verified nesting on ridges to the west and north of Milltown. Foraging habitat on Parcels B & C.
Great Blue Heron <i>(Ardea Herodias)</i>	SOC, Tier 3	Riparian woodlands	Rookery located at the upper end of the former Milltown Reservoir near the old railroad bed, about 0.14 miles (228 meters) from Parcel A.
Northern Goshawk <i>(Accipiter gentilis)</i>	SOC, Tier 2	Mixed conifer forests	Foraging habitat on all parcels. Potential nesting habitat on Parcel C.
Pileated Woodpecker <i>(Dryocopus pileatus)</i>	SOC, Tier 2	Moist conifer forests	Best habitat on Parcels A & C.
Peregrine Falcon <i>(Falco peregrinus)</i>	Delisted, SOC, Tier 2	Cliffs, forages over riparian, wetland habitats	Bonner nest site is located just off the NE corner of FWP Milltown State Park property along the Blackfoot River. Development of this site would need to consider potential impacts on this aerie.
Veery <i>(Catharus fuscescens)</i>	SOC, Tier 2-3	Riparian forests, shrubby habitats	Documented using riparian shrub habitat in the Milltown Reservoir area.
Pacific Wren <i>(Troglodytes pacificus)</i>	SOC, Tier 2	Moist conifer forests	Suitable habitat in area, not verified.
Western Skink <i>(Eumeces skiltonianus)</i>	SOC, Tier 2	Rock outcrops	Suitable habitat, not verified.
Western Toad <i>(Bufo boreas)</i>	SOC, Tier 2	Wetlands, lakes, floodplain pools	Verified in the Turah area; may use uplands adjacent to Clark Fork and Blackfoot rivers.

<b>Common name Species</b>	<b>Status*</b>	<b>Habitat</b>	<b>Status in Vicinity of Parcels</b>
A. Millipede ( <i>Adrietyla cucullata</i> )	SOC	Dry mixed conifer forest clearings	Unknown
A. Millipede ( <i>Austrotyla montani</i> )	SOC	Mixed conifer forests	Unknown
A. Millipede ( <i>Corypus cochlearis</i> )	SOC	Mixed conifer forests	Unknown
<b><u>Potential Species of Concern</u></b>			
Barrow's Goldeneye ( <i>Bucephala islandica</i> )	PSOC, Tier 3	Wetlands	Documented to occur in the area during migration.
Hooded Merganser ( <i>Lophodytes cucullatus</i> )	PSOC, Tier 2	Rivers and riparian wetlands	Documented to occur in the area during migration. Potential breeding habitat in oxbow wetlands along the Clark Fork River upstream of the former dam site.
An Ice Crawler ( <i>Grylloblatta campodeiformis</i> )	PSOC		Unknown due to its nocturnal habits and activity at temperatures just above freezing.

\*Tier 1 status identifies those species in greatest conservation need.

### 1.5 Authority and Responsibility

FWP has the authority to purchase lands that are suitable for state parks and outdoor recreation; and for game, bird, fish or fur-bearing animal restoration, propagation or protection; and for public hunting, fishing, or trapping areas per Montana state statute § 87-1-209, Montana Code Annotated (MCA).

Per state law, § 87-1-201(9), MCA, FWP is required to implement programs that address fire mitigation, pine beetle infestation, and wildlife habitat enhancement giving priority to forested lands in excess of 50 contiguous acres in any state park, fishing access site, or wildlife management area under the department's jurisdiction. With forested land on Parcels B and C, and the additional forested Bluff property acquired in 2010, FWP would develop and implement forest management plans for this property to meet the intent of this statute.

FWP is also required to deposit 20% of the purchase price, capped at \$300,000/acquisition, for properties it acquires (§§ 87-1-209 and 23-1-127(2), MCA). This account would be used for weed maintenance, fence installation or repair of existing fences, garbage removal, implementation of safety and health measures required by law to protect the public, erosion control, streambank stabilization, erection of barriers to preserve riparian vegetation and habitat, and planting of native trees, grasses, and shrubs for habitat stabilization. Such maintenance activities should be consistent with the Good Neighbor Policy (§ 23-1-126, MCA).

While all three parcels would be transferred or donated, FWP believes it is nonetheless in compliance with § 87-1-209, MCA because the amount of operations and maintenance in its NRDP grant over the life of the project *equals or exceeds* 20% of the purchase price or the cap of \$300,000, whichever is less.



## **2.0 ALTERNATIVES**

### **2.1. Alternative A--Proposed Action: FWP would accept the transfer/donation of three parcels totaling approximately 465 acres.**

FWP proposes to accept the transfer/donation of the three parcels of land to accomplish a vital task in the redevelopment of the Milltown Superfund site and adjoining lands as a new state park. FWP ownership of the three parcels, along with lands acquired in 2010, would consolidate the initial Milltown State Park boundaries and allow for the park's recreational and interpretive development.

**Parcel A** is currently entirely within the boundary of the Milltown Reservoir Sediments Superfund site, on land formerly owned by NorthWestern Energy. The 416-acre property includes the reconstructed river channel and floodplain of the Clark Fork River as well as the riverbanks of the lower Blackfoot River in Milltown, from the Bonner pedestrian bridge downstream to the confluence with the Clark Fork River, and terminating at the railroad bridge crossing the Clark Fork River (Fig. 2, 3). The site has seen extensive revegetation with a variety of riparian plant species, though these remain in an early and still fragile state of recovery.



Figure 2. Parcel A: Clark Fork River floodplain and confluence with the Blackfoot River.



Figure 3. Parcel A: Milltown Gateway and Confluence Area with the Milltown Bluff (Parcel B) and Jacobs Property (Parcel C) in the background.

In 2008, the Working Group, with the Clark Fork Coalition, jointly submitted a grant proposal that received NRDP Restoration Funds to acquire approximately 416 acres of land from NorthWestern Energy on behalf of the State of Montana. Those lands were formally acquired in December 2010 by the NRDP.

**Parcel B** is the Milltown Bluff property located on the south side of the Clark Fork River above the former dam site. The 13.6 acre site is forested and interspersed with grasslands. Two unimproved trails lead to the bluff's edge (Fig. 4). The land was acquired by the state of Montana in February 2011 and DEQ currently has management authority for the site. As part of the Milltown Superfund remedial action, the DEQ is developing an overlook and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible trail, which is scheduled to be complete by fall of 2011. Until its acquisition by the state, the bluff property had public access only as a result of customary use.

**Parcel C** is the Jacobs property located to the east of Deer Creek County Road (Fig. 5). FVLT purchased the privately held parcel adjacent to the proposed state park lands at Milltown to provide a critical access point and trail link between Missoula, the future state park on the old Milltown Dam site and nearby communities. The land is roughly two-thirds grassland and one-third coniferous forest and has been passively managed. Until its acquisition by FVLT, the Jacobs property had no public access.





Figure 4. Parcel B: Milltown Bluff and Clark Fork River.

Challenges for FWP related to the proposed acquisition include: The long-range operation and maintenance of the parcel and infrastructure improvements, ensuring adequate levels of and emergency response services, and enforcement of FWP rules throughout the parcels for protecting public safety, park facilities, and resource values. Funding for operations and maintenance expenses for the first five years, however, has been secured through the NRDP grant. FWP has begun investigating and discussing funding options for the long-term operation of the park, including the possible establishment of a not-for-profit organization for fundraising activities.



Figure 5. Parcel C: Jacobs Property, looking east from Deer Creek Road.

## **2.2 Alternative B--No Action: FWP would not accept the transfer/donation of the three parcels**

Under the No Action Alternative, FWP would not accept the land transfer and Montana State Parks would not proceed with development of a state park at Milltown.

Properties already owned by the State of Montana (Parcels A and B) would remain, respectively, under the management of the NRDP and DEQ. If Parcel A was not acquired, then the proposed state park would not move forward. Previously dedicated NRDP funds for park development, and operations and maintenance would be released to support different projects. Replacement of cost and injured natural resources subject to *Montana v. ARCO* would not be derived from this project.

FVLT would likely pursue another conservation buyer for the Jacobs property (Parcel C). If no interested buyer were found, the property could be put on the real estate market for a private buyer (and potentially developed for residential use), and likely FVLT would require a conservation easement to protect resource values. Public access would not necessarily be provided by such an easement. If the Jacobs property were not acquired, the trail connection would not be established, and access to state-owned lands and any related trail corridors would be limited to access via county roads, state highways, or if possible along the railroad but would not provide a dedicated and safe trail connection for the public.

## **3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENT CONSEQUENCES**

### **3.1 Aesthetics and Recreational Opportunities**

Prior to the commencement of Superfund activities, the Milltown Reservoir was managed as a private reservoir, but Northwestern Energy and its predecessor, Montana Power Company, historically allowed public access. The NorthWestern Energy property (Parcel A), now owned by the State of Montana, has been closed to the public since 2006 for construction activities. That closure has been extended until the summer 2013, though the closure could be lifted sooner as conditions warrant.

Parcel B, which is the consolidation of several privately owned parcels, offered informal access to a popular viewpoint. Unmanaged use of the site saw some OHV traffic on the Bluff. Parcel C was privately owned and unavailable for public recreation though FVLT may allow access as an interim owner.

The Clark Fork and Blackfoot Rivers offer outlets for the increasing demand for river recreation. There are FWP fishing access sites (FASs) upstream and downstream from Parcel A. On the Clark Fork, Sharon FAS is approximately two miles downstream from the parcel, and Turah FAS is approximately 5.5 miles upstream from the overlook. Along the Blackfoot River, Parcel A (the Gateway and Confluence) is two miles downstream from Weigh Station FAS.

Angling pressure along the Blackfoot River from its confluence with the Clark Fork until it meets the Clearwater River near Clearwater Junction was estimated as 23,300 angling days in 2009, which ranked it as the 6<sup>th</sup> busiest river in the FWP Region 2 and 35<sup>th</sup> within the state. On the Clark Fork River, angling pressure between the Turah FAS and the Milltown dam area was 13,500 angling days for 2009.

The Blackfoot River currently receives substantial public use in the reach immediately upstream of the project area. FWP estimates public use at approximately 20,000 to 25,000 floaters, including anglers through the summer season in the lower reach of the Blackfoot River, from Johnsrud Park FAS downstream to the Weigh Station FAS.

The river reach through the restored confluence is expected to receive approximately equivalent levels of use, or more due to the proximity to the Missoula, East Missoula and West Riverside urban areas. The Kim Williams Trail, owned by the City of Missoula immediately downstream of the proposed project, is a very popular and heavily used trail in the greater Missoula-area trail network. According to Phil Smith, Bicycle/Pedestrian Coordinator for the City of Missoula, the Kim Williams trail in Missoula upstream to the east edge of the University of Montana, receives approximately 1,000 visitors per day based on trail user counts performed by the City. Smith estimates that the section of trail extending up the Clark Fork from the University to the end of the Kim Williams trail, just downstream from the current proposed project area, receives about 300 to 400 non-motorized visitors per day during the spring, summer and fall. This use would likely increase significantly when the connections are made to the Canyon River Golf Course and the pedestrian bridge and trails proposed in this project. Thus, the trail access facilities dependent on this proposed acquisition are likely to provide access to between 300 to 1,000 users per day for about nine months per year. The use is expected to be comparable to the Missoula sections, since the population density in surrounding communities is similar to and in some areas, such as West Riverside and East Missoula, higher than that in Missoula.

Proposed Action: With acquisition of the three Milltown State Park parcels, Montana State Parks would build momentum toward the development of a new state park at the confluence of the Blackfoot and Clark Fork Rivers guided by the Milltown Park Concept Plan. The acquisition would provide the public continuing opportunities for many outdoor recreational activities including wildlife viewing, fishing, floating, hiking, biking, and picnicking. The acquisition of these parcels would also provide access to approximately 1,800 acres of adjacent TNC and US Forest Service lands for hunting of white-tailed and mule deer, elk, black bear, and upland game birds.

The proposed acquisitions are expected to benefit a large number of visitors to the confluence area, due to its proximity to the communities of Missoula, West Riverside, Bonner and Milltown, and the anticipated level of interest in the restored confluence area. FWP anticipates redistribution of angling pressure downstream of Weigh Station FAS with the acquisition of Parcel A and along the Blackfoot River. The addition of Parcel A eventually would provide floaters with additional access to the Blackfoot and Clark Fork Rivers.

FWP would manage the parcels for year-round nonmotorized public recreation. Firewood cutting, OHV trail riding, and camping would be prohibited. Hunting likely would be limited because of the parcels' sizes and proximity to residential areas. The upstream portion of Parcel A, however, could potentially provide some opportunities for waterfowl hunting and possibly bowhunting. In the future and as the development of the park facilities is initiated, Montana State Parks plans to evaluate all recreational opportunities within the park as it develops a formal management plan for the site.

The three parcels would contribute to the new state park's long-term plans to serve as a hub for a trail system that would connect to Missoula and Turah. The existing trails would eventually link up with a



planned trails system, which is yet to be constructed, within the Milltown Reservoir remediation and restoration project area. These new trails could not be constructed until remediation and restoration is complete. The Kim Williams Trail, owned by the City of Missoula immediately downstream of the proposed project area, is a popular heavily used trail in the greater Missoula area trail network.

The acquisition by FWP of the three Milltown State Park parcels would preclude subdivision and residential development and would help preserve the forested mountain viewsheds for the valley communities to enjoy. The acquisition of the parcels by FWP would also provide buffer zones between developed areas and wildlands for the benefit of wildlife species. Preservation of the land as a park would protect riparian resources, wildlife habitat and visual resources. Parcel A would also provide managed public access along the two rivers.

Montana State Parks anticipates that visitor use of the new park would be moderate to high depending upon the season. With the configuration of the park and limited resources, there could be challenges associated with managing recreation on the property. These challenges could be related to: public safety, law enforcement coverage, emergency response services, vandalism, maintenance, noxious weed management, and resource protection. For the immediate future, existing FWP staff based out of Missoula, including the newly hired Milltown State Park Manager and, in 2012, a maintenance worker, would manage the Milltown State Park property.

Recreation would be managed in accordance with applicable FWP rules and regulations, including the Parks Biennial Fee Rule, Commercial Use Administrative Rules, and Commercial Use Permit Fee Rule. FWP would install appropriate boundary and regulation signage, and additional site information would be available via brochures and FWP's Montana State Parks website (<http://fwp.mt.gov/parks/>, accessed 6 June 2011) to inform the public of the recreational opportunities and activities within the park.

Public safety and law enforcement issues are priorities for management of state parks. Milltown State Park staff has begun coordination with the search and rescue team from the Missoula Fire Department. Montana State Parks would also coordinate internally with the FWP law enforcement section, as well as with the Missoula County Sheriff's Department and the US Forest Service law enforcement to ensure adequate coverage as the parcels open to the public.

No Action: If FWP decides not to acquire the parcels, Parcels A and B would remain with the state of Montana (NRDP and DEQ, respectively). Existing recreation opportunities would likely be available to the public though the recreational amenities envisioned under the Milltown State Park Conceptual Design plan would likely go unrealized.

Future access for recreational activities on Parcel C under FVLT ownership would be difficult to analyze. FVLT would likely find another buyer for the land and public access on the parcel could be maintained, decreased or eliminated depending upon the plans of the new owner.

### **3.2 Cultural and Historic Resources**

Much of the breadth of western history can be traced through the Two Rivers confluence, beginning with the last collapsing ice dam that unleashed Glacial Lake Missoula floods some 13,000 years ago, and concluding with the removal of the Milltown Dam and the restoration of Two Rivers Confluence.

In 1854, Captain John Mullan surveyed through the site of Milltown and in 1858-61 carved the Mullan Trail from Walla Walla, Washington to Fort Benton, Montana (The Bicentennial Committee Bonner School, 1976). It was not until the mid-1880s that the towns of Bonner and Milltown were established when lumber mills were established to provide timber for the Northern Pacific Railroad. In the early days, the population of these communities was comprised of Swedes, Norwegians, Finns, and French Canadians with smaller numbers of Scots, Irish, and Germans.

Although the timber mills dominated the area for decades, the building of the Milltown Dam across the Clark Fork River in 1905-08 provided the growing electric system in Missoula additional energy and also was used to establish an interurban streetcar service between Bonner and Missoula. Many houses built by the mill for its employees still remain in Bonner and Milltown.

There are known tribal cultural resources in the vicinity of the former Milltown Dam Reservoir and within the project area. The Bonner-Milltown area was an important junction on the trail to the east across the mountains toward Potomac. The confluence area was an important camp, rendezvous, and fishing area for native peoples (The Bicentennial Committee Bonner School, 1976).

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes are trustees of natural resources within the project area as a result of rights associated with the 1855 Hellgate Treaty. The Tribes have been active partners in developing the State's Restoration Plan for the Clark Fork River and Blackfoot River near Milltown Dam and are engaged in the park planning efforts.

Proposed Action: FWP's proposed acquisition would have a positive effect on any cultural or historical resources by securing and managing them in public ownership. Under the Montana Antiquities Act (§ 22-3-433, MCA), all state agencies are required to consult with the State Historic Preservation Office on the identification and location of heritage properties on lands owned by the state that may be adversely impacted by a proposed action or development project.

FWP has recently partnered with Missoula County on interpretive planning effort for the Milltown State Park site funded through the State Historic Preservation Office and Preserve America. That work would be carried out in 2011-12. In addition, FWP is working with DEQ to draft text and images for interpretive panels that would accompany the Bluff Overlook on Parcel B.

No Action: If the transfer does not occur for Parcels A and B, historical resources within the parcels would be protected by either the Montana antiquities laws (§ 22-3-4 MCA) or the applicable federal laws, including the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. The pending interpretive planning effort for the Milltown State Park would not occur. If Parcel C were sold to a private party, it is unknown if or at what level historic sites would be affected.

### **3.3 Community and Taxes**

All of the Milltown State Park parcels are within a two-mile radius of the unincorporated communities of Bonner, Milltown, Piltzville and West Riverside. Since Bonner is unincorporated, an estimation of population of the immediate area is difficult to define. However, the School District estimates the population of the immediate area (Bonner, Milltown, Piltzville, and West Riverside) to be 1,800.

For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the economies of Bonner and Milltown centered on their timber mills, but after a long decline culminating with the closure of the Stimson Lumber mill in 2008, neighboring communities have been struggling. As an indicator of the economic climate of the local community, there are 380 children attending the Bonner School (K-8<sup>th</sup> grade) and 60% are receiving assistance through a reduced-cost meals program.

In 2005, Missoula County completed updates to its Growth Policy (and again amended it in 2010) to provide guidance for decision-making for community and economic development, transportation management, public facilities, and natural resource management. Many of the Plan's community goals and objectives integrate preserving and improving the natural environment within Missoula County. The Natural Environment Goals are: 1) create sustainable relationship between human activities and natural systems and 2) protect the natural environment and improve it where degradation has occurred. Goals that relate to FWP's proposed land acquisition include: #6 Protect existing wetlands and restore historic wetlands wherever possible, #9 Protect areas critical for wildlife survival and minimize impacts on less critical wildlife, #11 Preserve and enhance the urban forest, #12 Minimize noxious weeds, and #13 Preserve area with scenic open space value.

Property taxes assessed on the Parcels B and C totaled \$316.50 per year based on Missoula County's current tax assessment. Parcel A was not listed in Missoula County's Property Information System.

Proposed Action: The proposed acquisition of the Milltown State Park parcels would not be expected to have any negative affects to the communities of Bonner, Milltown, or West Riverside. There is the potential that if the establishment of the anticipated new state park near the confluence area is completed, as well as the trail system connecting the park with Missoula, the local communities could experience an influx of visitors going to the park. This influx could spur new economic development and lead to recreation-based businesses to emerge in those communities.

The proposed acquisition by FWP would be consistent with the goals of the Missoula County Growth Plan in that scenic and natural places within the county would be preserved for future generations of residents to enjoy. Wildlife habitat important to bighorn sheep and the wildlife corridor between the Sapphire and Rattlesnake Mountains would remain available to migratory species. Furthermore, there are additional goals and objectives specific to cultural and historic resources and development patterns identified in the Growth Plan that would be reached through FWP's acquisition of the Milltown State Park parcels.

Transfer of Parcel C to FWP for a state park would prohibit future subdivision of the property and potential revenues to the county that would result. However, preclusion of subdivision would also save the county from having to provide services (public safety, etc.) to newly developed areas. Of the three parcels, only a portion of Parcel C has been zoned by the County. Its zoning, C-RR1, according to Missoula County Zoning Resolution, "provides for a transitional low density residential district between urbanized areas and agricultural uses, as well as provides a zone that may be used to meet residential needs while limiting density to recognize environmental concerns." C-RR1 would allow one dwelling unit per acre. The other parcels are not zoned.

Property taxes paid to the County is not expected to change. FWP is required by law to make tax payments to counties equal to the amount that a private landowner would be required to pay per § 87-1-603, MCA. Payments would be paid from existing FWP accounts.

No Action: If the property were sold to a conservation buyer, taxes paid to the County would likely remain about the same as now. If the parcels were sold and used for limited residential development, the amount of tax revenue paid to the County could be higher than the current level but the exact amount of change is difficult to predict.

### **3.4 Land Use**

On Parcel A, the Superfund cleanup is nearing completion: The remediation, (i.e., the removal of the dam and the most contaminated sediments) was largely completed in 2009. The restoration work, (reconstruction of the river channel and flood plain) is expected to be finished in 2011. At this time, the Clark Fork River floodplain is in a fragile state of recovery. Newly graded areas have been seeded and planted with native trees and shrubs. The area, currently closed to the public, is under the authority of the State's NRDP, which would continue its management oversight on river restoration work into the coming years. Fee title would be transferred as restoration work reaches substantial completion.

The portion of Parcel A along the Blackfoot River corridor (the Gateway and Confluence areas) is a steep embankment that is largely inaccessible to the public, though there is a social trail and transients have been known to camp under the I-90 bridges. While there are some native plants on the margin, noxious weeds are found throughout the site. Parcel A in the Confluence Area has several structures, including a maintenance shop and several outbuildings.

Parcel B is a bluff located on the south side of the Clark Fork River, approximately 100 feet above the water. The parcel is forested with open meadows interspersed. Two primitive trails access the bluff's edge. These trails are proposed for obliteration once the overlook trail is developed.

Parcel C is undeveloped and has been used largely for grazing horses. A high-voltage power line runs through the property as does an underground petroleum pipeline. A Phase 1 environmental site assessment conducted by Tetra Tech (September 2010) found no recognized environmental liability conditions on the parcel. Parcel C includes lands that could be highly desirable for residential development, and the parcel is zoned for residential development.

Several access points into Parcel A exist: The Gateway is accessible from 1<sup>st</sup> Street in West Riverside and Anaconda Street in Milltown, while the Confluence area is accessed from Tamarack Road off Montana Highway 200. The Clark Fork floodplain would be accessible (once reopened) off of Highway 210 in Piltzville through the Bonner Development Group Park. Parcels B and C are accessible from the Deer Creek Road.

Proposed Action FWP would acquire fee title ownership of Parcels A, B, and C for incorporation into the Milltown State Park. Development of any trails, bridges, or park facilities would be described, analyzed, and open to public comment in future environmental assessments. The next expected EA would detail proposed facilities development of the Milltown Gateway and Confluence area (Parcel A), and would include a bike-pedestrian trail and pedestrian bridge over the Clark Fork River.

Once DEQ completes the Overlook construction, the Milltown Bluff, (Parcel B) would be transferred to the FWP. FVLT would then donate Parcel C to FWP for inclusion in the State Park.

Montana State Parks would manage Parcels A, B and C as open space recreation areas for hiking, mountain bike riding, fishing, and wildlife viewing. Motorized recreation, such as OHV use, would be prohibited, as would the cutting of firewood. Hunting is expected to be limited because of the parcels' sizes and proximity to residential areas. The acquisition of these parcels would continue to provide access to approximately 1,800 acres of adjacent TNC and US Forest Service lands for hunting species such as white-tailed and mule deer, elk, black bear, and upland game birds. Additional analysis of recreational activities is discussed in Section 3.1.

A search of the Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology Abandoned and Inactive Mines database for Missoula County did not identify any former hard rock mines (gold, silver, etc.) within any of the parcels. All parcels are identified as being in the historic Clinton Mining District.

No Action: Under the No Action Alternative, the NRDP would retain ownership and management responsibilities for Parcel A and the DEQ would retain ownership for the Parcel B. The two agencies have a mandate that may not allow for the provision of recreational and educational opportunities. Parcels A and B could be retained as open space with limited recreational use depending on the agencies' management objectives. Parcel C would remain with FVLT, and that organization would pursue new conservation owners that may or may not ensure public access and use.

### **3.5 Vegetation**

Much of Parcel A (the Clark Fork floodplain) is the site of an extensive sediment removal and re-grading project. The floodplain is in a raw and fragile state and protecting newly established riparian vegetation on Parcel A is a critical goal of the NRDP's Milltown restoration plan. Planning and appropriately directed public use would provide public access to the area while limiting uncontrolled access and minimizing potential damage to vegetation, stream banks and soils. Acquisition of the lands proposed in this EA would protect those areas from residential or other development, protecting native vegetation.

Coniferous forest comprises approximately 70% of Parcel B and 45% of Parcel C. Forest types include predominately ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) and Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), with aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) and western larch (*Larix occidentalis*) present in limited quantities. The underbrush includes snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*), kinnikinnick (*Arctostaphylos uva-uris*), and ninebark (*Physocarpus malvaceus*). Much of the conifer forest habitat on the Parcel B has been harvested in the past because the properties were owned by local timber mills.

Invasive weed species are present in varying degrees within all the parcels. Exotic weed species include spotted knapweed (*Centaurea maculosa*), leafy spurge (*Euphorbia esula*), common hound's-tongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*), and Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*). As part of its Milltown restoration plan, NRDP has a weed management plan for Parcel A. NRDP has worked with the Missoula County Weed District to map the presence of weeds and devise a weed management plan that would be instituted upon FWP's completion of the acquisition. Active weed management on Parcel B has been absent on the parcel in recent years. The DEQ is committed to two weed treatments as part of its overlook development in 2011 and 2012. Similarly, on Parcel C it is likely that the occurrence of invasive weeds would diminish under FVLT interim ownership since it plans to engage in an aggressive weed management effort, which would provide an overall benefit to the health and diversity of the vegetation resources that exist on the property.



There are no known unique, rare, threatened, or endangered plant species, nor prime or unique farmlands on the parcels. Newly constructed wetlands on Parcel A would be protected under FWP ownership.

Proposed Action: FWP acquisition of the three proposed Milltown State Park parcels would prevent further impacts from industrial timber harvest and provide opportunity for future riparian corridor restoration activities. Regionally, riparian corridors have been most threatened by residential development and industrial timber harvest activities.

In cooperation with the NRDP, FWP management of Parcel A would help ensure the successful recovery of riparian plants species on the Clark Fork floodplain.

Wildfires would be subject to immediate suppression upon detection. Fire suppression on the Milltown State Park parcels would fall under the jurisdiction of the Department of Natural Resources and Conservations (DNRC).

If FWP were to acquire the three Milltown State Park parcels, FWP would agree on a Weed Management Plan specific to the remaining Milltown State Park parcels with Missoula County Weed District, which would be in accordance with “The Montana Weed Management Plan (2008; <http://fwpiis.mt.gov/content/getItem.aspx?id=46125>, access 24 Jun 2010) and the FWP Region 2 Parks Division Weed Management Implementation Plan (2010). In accordance with § 7-22-215, MCA, the state is required to have its property inspected and develop a site-specific noxious weed management plan agreement in cooperation with the weed district. Any isolated patches of invading species would be treated by the most efficient and effective means (e.g., hand-pulling, digging or herbicide spot treatment), depending on weed species and site limitations. FWP’s priority for herbicide control of noxious weeds on the subject lands would be to spray roadsides and previously disturbed areas. Roadsides would be inspected annually for the purpose of detecting and treating any new weed introductions before infestations become established.

No Action: If FWP decides not to accept transfer of the parcels, Parcels A and B would remain with the State of Montana (NRDP and DEQ, respectively). These agencies would retain responsibility for weed management. If FVLT retained Parcel C and were to sell it to a conservation buyer, there could be potential impacts to the vegetation resources (e.g., timber management and grazing) depending upon new landowners and their intended management of the landscape. If FVLT sold the parcel to a private buyer, the exact level of this risk is unknown since future impacts to resources and public access would be dependent on the plans of the property’s new owner(s). It is difficult to predict how new ownership would affect existing vegetation and wildlife habitat resources. There is the potential for residential development, which could negatively impact habitat for wildlife species and the forested view-shed.

### **3.6 Wildlife Species**

Even with the relatively high level of human presence and being bisected by I-90 and a Montana Rail Link railroad line, the Clark Fork and Blackfoot Rivers confluence area is within an important ungulate and large carnivore movement corridor between the Salmon-Selway ecosystem southwest of Missoula and the Northern Continental Divide ecosystem northeast of Missoula, with the preferred routes traversing the Bitterroot Mountains to the north end of the Sapphire Mountains, passing east of the

Rattlesnake Wilderness area (Walker and Craighead 1997, American Wildlands 2008). Species known to use the corridor are white-tailed deer, elk, black bear, mountain lion, and gray wolf. Additionally, the parcels are frequented by moose, and a wolverine was trapped nearby at higher elevations.

Parcel A includes more than 2.5 miles of riverfront along the Clark Fork River as well numerous off-channel wetlands. Parcel A also includes land along the north side of the Blackfoot River, across the river from Milltown and the former Stimson Mill. The Clark Fork and Blackfoot Rivers' riparian habitats provide seasonal and year-round use by a variety of species, including great blue heron, bald eagle, osprey, Canada goose, mallard, common merganser, pileated woodpecker, belted kingfisher, great horned owl, and many other small mammal, amphibian, and avian species.

Parcel B is heavily wooded and provides habitat for white-tailed deer and various small mammals and avian species. Although this parcel does not include river frontage to the Clark Fork River, it provides an access point for wildlife to the river valley and confluence area.

On Parcel C no critical fish or wildlife habitat or threatened or endangered species are known to occur on the property, and anticipated future improvements and recreational uses of the property would not affect wildlife diversity or serve to encourage the introduction of new species.

A list of sensitive species observed on or nearby the property, or those likely to occur based on species distribution range and habitat suitability, is included in Table 1.

Proposed Action: FWP acquisition of the three Milltown State Park parcels would ensure connectivity between the nearby Sapphire Mountains and the Rattlesnake Wilderness for wide-ranging native species, such as grizzly bear, black bear, and white-tailed deer. FWP's acquisition would protect and lead to the enhancement of riparian corridors important to migratory songbirds, small and large mammals, amphibians, and aquatic species (fish species are described in Section 3.7).

Active management of the property, particularly through weed control should provide some net improvement in the amount of available forage and overall quality of wildlife habitat.

FWP management of Parcels A, B and C would maintain nonmotorized recreation opportunities and wildlife viewing opportunities and possibly some limited waterfowl and bowhunting opportunities. No significant impacts are expected to wildlife species if the proposed action is approved.

No Action: Under the No Action alternative, Parcels A and B would remain with the NRDP and DEQ, respectively. Wildlife would likely still benefit from public ownership. If no action were taken by FWP, then the FVLT would look for another conservation buyer for Parcel C, in which the current wildlife resources (e.g., diversity, habitat, etc.) might be maintained and the impacts would be minimal if any. If the parcels were sold to a private buyer, important local habitat for a host of game and nongame wildlife species might be impacted, an important corridor between the Sapphire and Rattlesnake Mountains wildland complexes could be compromised, and the subject lands could be put at greater long-term risk of residential development. Exact level of risk of loss of habitat and public access are unknown, since these are dependent on the plans of the new property owner(s).

### **3.7 Fisheries Species and Water Resources**

The Blackfoot River is one of twelve renowned “Blue Ribbon” rivers in Montana and a major tributary of the Clark Fork River. The river begins near the Continental Divide and flows 132 miles to its mouth at Bonner, where it merges with the Clark Fork. Fish species present in the Blackfoot River, and the Clark Fork, include rainbow trout, brown trout, mountain whitefish, brook trout, westslope cutthroat trout (Montana Species of Concern), bull trout (threatened species under Federal ESA), various sucker and sculpin species, redbelt shiner, longnose dace, northern pikeminnow, peamouth, and others.

Milltown State Park Parcel A has 2.5 miles of river frontage along the Clark Fork, and approximately 2000 feet of frontage along the lower Blackfoot River.

*Floodplain:* Much of Parcel A is identified as being within the 100-year floodplain by US Federal Emergency Management Agency floodplain map database. Parcels B and C are not adjacent to nor do they include bodies of water.

*Water Rights:* The State of Montana acquired from NorthWestern Energy a water right for up to 2,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) of in-stream flow for hydropower generation at the former dam site, with a priority date of 1907. This water right would benefit instream flows for fisheries by securing the instream flow rights. A search of the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation water rights database identified no water right records associated with the Parcels B and C.

Proposed Action: The project would have no impacts on fisheries habitat, fish passage or aquatic species. FWP acquisition of Parcel A would protect more than three miles of riverine riparian habitat along the Clark Fork and Blackfoot Rivers. The project would be beneficial to fisheries and water quality, floodplain management, and wetlands because protecting those resources is the goal of the state’s NRDP Milltown restoration plan, and FWP ownership would enhance the state’s ability to provide continuity with goals of that plan.

No Action Alternative: If FWP decides not to accept the transfer the parcels, Parcel A would remain under the state’s NRDP. Fisheries and water resources would not be affected.

### **3.8 Cumulative Impacts**

Proposed Action: Transfer of the two state-owned parcels and a donated parcel to FWP would allow Montana State Parks to implement a park design developed by community stakeholders and the public over the last eight years. Impacts of the development phase would be described and analyzed in another environmental assessment. However, over the long term, some impacts to the human environment are anticipated and would likely be mitigated through the FWP’s Best Management Practices for construction of facilities and the management of the Park for the benefit of public recreation and wildlife and fisheries species.

Continuing public access to the subject lands would maintain the existing recreational opportunities, such as hiking, wildlife viewing, mountain bike riding, and fishing. The proposed acquisition would also complete a vital step for the plans of establishing a new state park at the confluence of the Blackfoot and Clark Fork Rivers. Local and regional economies and lifestyles tied to the unique presence of expansive fish, wildlife, and recreation resources would be maintained and likely enhanced. Combining outdoor recreational opportunities, heritage tourism, and environmental education, the Milltown State Park could

prove itself a force for community revitalization and serve as a new motor of economic activity in Milltown area.

Economic impact to the County and the local areas are expected to be mostly positive over the long term with the establishment and development of the Milltown State Park and the extended trail system. In Montana, visitors to state parks spent \$289 million in 2010, with more than 40 percent of that spending coming from nonresidents. (*2010 Economic Impact Survey of Visitors to Montana State Parks*, Bureau of Business and Economic Research, University of Montana, December 2010.)

Acquisition of the parcels also would help ensure that managed use protects newly established riparian vegetation along the reconstructed banks of the Clark Fork and Blackfoot Rivers. Success of the river restoration effort, in turn, would foster fish and wildlife habitat. The long term protection of riparian areas along the Blackfoot River and would assist in any future fisheries habitat restoration activities initiated by FWP to improve habitat quality for native trout populations, as well as other aquatic and terrestrial species. The proposed acquisition would also contribute to the long term preservation of wildlife movement corridors between the Sapphire Mountains and the Rattlesnake Wilderness for wide-ranging wildlife such as wolverine, grizzly bear, mountain lion, and other species in an area where residential development is a threat to the remaining open space.

No Action: The implementation of the No Action alternative would eliminate these parcels from the broader development plans for the establishment of the state park at the confluence of the Blackfoot and Clark Fork Rivers. Parcel A constitutes the core of the proposed Milltown State Park, and without it, the park vision would be fundamentally diminished, and the 2008 conceptual design would be essentially moot. Funds awarded to FWP for the development of the park and its operations and management for five years would likely be reassigned by the NRDP. FWP would retain three isolated parcels acquired from the TNC in 2010. Their acquisition, however, anticipated the eventual inclusion Parcel A lands.

Under the No Action alternative, the State of Montana would determine the ultimate management authority for Parcel A and similarly for Parcel B. If continued under public ownership, impacts to vegetation, wildlife, fisheries, and public access could be minimal and meet many of the goals and objectives of the Missoula County Growth Plan for its natural resources. The wildlife corridor between the Sapphire Mountains and the Rattlesnake Wilderness could be protected from development and ensure a forested view-shed in perpetuity.

If Parcel C were sold to private buyers, their existing natural resource values could be impacted if they were developed for residences, even with a protective conservation easement. Wildlife movements may change to navigate around newly developed sites and public access to the parcels and on to adjoining public lands may be precluded.

#### **4.0 RESOURCE ISSUES CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED FROM DETAILED ANALYSIS**

The Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) provides for the identification and elimination from detailed study, of issues that are not significant or which have been covered by a prior environmental review (ARM 12.2.434(d)). FWP anticipates the following resources would be unaffected by the

proposed action, or if there were any effects, those influences could be adequately mitigated. As a result, these resources were eliminated from further detailed analysis.

#### **4.1 Soils**

A query of the US Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Soil Survey database of the Milltown State Park parcels identified only 10 different soil types throughout the parcels, which are dominated by gravelly loams. Soil types identified included Orthents, Repp very gravelly loam, Tally sandy loam, Winkler gravelly loam, Perma stoney loan, and Winkler-Rubble land complex (USDA Soil Survey database, 10/8/10)

None of the Milltown State Park parcels include Prime or Unique farmland, as designated by the US Agricultural Department.

No soil impacts are anticipated to the parcels, because no ground disturbing activities are proposed in this Draft EA for land transfer/donation to FWP.

#### **4.2 Air Quality**

Under either alternative, changes to the ambient air quality are unlikely since neither FWP nor the School District have immediate plans for construction or development which could affect particulate levels and air quality.

#### **4.3 Noise and Electrical Effects**

Traffic noise from I-90 or Highway 200 can easily be heard from Parcels A, B and C. In addition, more than 15 trains a day pass immediately through the site. The potential for changes in noise levels would depend on the FWP's authorized recreational activities within its parcels and the intensity of those activities in a specific location. FWP likely would limit motorized activities within its parcels, so ambient noise levels are expected to remain at existing levels.

Existing utility easements (electrical, telephone, etc.) would not be affected by either alternative.

#### **4.4 Risk and Health Hazards**

NRD completed a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) prior to acquisition of Parcels A and B, and FVLT completed a Phase I ESA prior to acquiring Parcel C. Remediation of Parcels A and B by NRDP and DEQ would be complete prior to acquisition by FWP. FVLT's Phase I found that further investigation of the site was not warranted.

### **5.0 NEED FOR AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) required? No. Based upon This Draft EA, which has identified only a very limited number of minor impacts from the proposed action, an EIS is not required and an Environmental Assessment is the appropriate level of review.



## **6.0 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

### **6.1 Public Involvement**

#### Planning Process:

The Milltown Redevelopment Working Group, in cooperation with FWP, Missoula County and the National Park Service Rivers and Trail Conservation Assistance Program considered several design alternatives during the intensive park design process conducted in 2007. A Design Team was convened for an intensive design workshop, comprising local and county residents, area youth, stakeholder interest groups, natural resource and recreation management agencies, and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes.

Public opinion was solicited during the design work shop and immediately following its completion to find out what the public liked and did not like about each proposal. Following the workshop, a second round of public meetings was conducted and two design alternatives were presented for public comment. After the public meetings, the Milltown Redevelopment Working Group discussed the design options and public comment over the course of several meetings and selected a revised version of the low intensity development alternative.

The Working Group members gave presentations to, among others, the Bonner School Board, the Bonner Community Council, community groups, City and County officials and agencies, emergency services personnel, college students, and community access television. This plan was ultimately presented to the Missoula County Commissioners, who unanimously endorsed it in July, 2008.

#### Current Environmental Assessment:

Public notification of the Milltown State Park Proposed Parcel Acquisitions Draft EA release and opportunities to comment would be by:

- A statewide news release
- Two legal notices in each of these newspapers: *Independent Record* (Helena) and *Missoulian*;
- Direct mailing to adjacent landowners and interested parties;
- Public notice and posting the EA on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: <http://fwp.mt.gov> ("Submit Public Comments," then "State Parks").

This EA may be obtained by mail from Region 2 FWP, 3201 Spurgin Rd., Missoula 59804; by phoning 406-542-5500; by emailing [fwprg22@mt.gov](mailto:fwprg22@mt.gov); or by viewing FWP's Internet website <http://fwp.mt.gov> ("Submit Public Comments," then "State Parks").beginning June 24, 2011.) This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope having few limited physical and human impacts.

### **6.2 Duration of Comment Period**

The public comment period will extend for a minimum of thirty (30) days beginning June 24, 2011. Comments will be accepted by FWP until 5:00 p.m. on July 25, 2011 and can be mailed to the address below:

Milltown State Park Acquisition  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
Region 2 Headquarters  
3201 Spurgin Rd.  
Missoula, MT 59804

or emailed to: [MilltownPark@mt.gov](mailto:MilltownPark@mt.gov)  
or phoned to: 406-542-5533

### **6.3 Timeline of Events**

Environmental Assessment Public Comment Period	June 24 – July 25, 2011
Decision Notice Issued (estimated)	July 31, 2011
Submittal to the FWP Commission for decision	August 11, 2011
Submittal to the Montana Land Board for decision	August 15, 2011

### **6.4 Offices/Programs Contacted or Contributing to this Document:**

Missoula County Assessor Office, Missoula, MT  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks:  
    Lands Bureau, Helena  
    Legal Bureau, Helena  
    Parks Division, Helena and Missoula  
    Wildlife and Fisheries Division, Missoula  
Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Helena, MT  
Montana Natural Heritage Program, Species of Concern database  
Natural Resource Damage Program, Montana Department of Justice, Helena, MT  
The Nature Conservancy, Missoula, MT  
Five Valleys Land Trust, Missoula, MT  
US Department of Agriculture, Soil Survey Database  
US Fish and Wildlife Service, Wetlands Database

## **7.0 EA PREPARATION**

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Sharon Rose, FWP R2 Comments Coordinator, Missoula, MT  
Pat Saffel, FWP R-2 Fisheries Manager, Missoula, MT  
Roger Semler, FWP Parks Division Operations Bureau Chief, Helena, MT

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